

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI
EASTERN DIVISION

MELVIN GRIER,

Plaintiff,

v.

D. MARSHAIK, et al.,

Defendants.

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No. 4:21-CV-01465 SPM

MEMORANDUM AND ORDER

This matter is before the Court on the filing of a complaint by inmate Melvin Grier. For the reasons discussed below, plaintiff will be directed to file an application for leave to proceed *in forma pauperis* or pay the full \$402 filing fee. Plaintiff will also be directed to file an amended complaint on a Court-provided form.

Background

On July 22, 2021, Garrette Bellew filed a civil rights action on behalf of himself and nine other inmates related to an incident that occurred at the Jefferson County Detention Center in March 2020. *See Barnett v. Marshaik*, No. 4:21-CV-907-DDN (E.D. Mo.).¹ Because multiple prisoners may not join together in a single lawsuit, the Court severed the additional plaintiffs from Mr. Bellew's action. *See, e.g., Georgeoff v. Barnes*, No. 2:09-CV-14-ERW, ECF No. 10 (E.D. Mo.); Fed. R. Civ. P. 20. Thus, this action was opened on behalf of plaintiff Melvin Grier on December 14, 2021. *See Barnett*, No. 4:21-CV-907-DDN, ECF No. 2.

Because plaintiff failed to include his own claims in the complaint, or sign the pleading, the Court will require plaintiff to file an amended complaint on a court-provided form.

¹ Mr. Bellew was the only plaintiff to sign the complaint, and he was the only plaintiff to submit a motion to proceed *in forma pauperis* in this case.

Additionally, plaintiff will be required to file an application for leave to proceed *in forma pauperis* or pay the full \$402 filing fee. Plaintiff will have thirty (30) days to comply with the Court Order.

Discussion

Under the Local Rules of this Court: “An application to proceed in forma pauperis shall be accompanied by a statement of the applicant’s financial information set forth on a form provided by the Court. The Court may require the submission of additional information in a particular case.” E.D. Mo. L.R. 2.05(A). Additionally, the Clerk can return any complaint submitted for filing *in forma pauperis* that is not accompanied by an affidavit as required by 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a). E.D. Mo. L.R. 2.05(C). Under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(1), the affidavit should include “a statement of all assets.”

The Court may authorize the commencement or prosecution of a civil action without prepayment of fees if the plaintiff demonstrates that he “is unable to pay such fees or give security therefor.” 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(1). *In forma pauperis* status is a matter of privilege, not of right. *Williams v. McKenzie*, 834 F.2d 152, 154 (8th Cir. 1987). To enjoy the statute’s benefits, a litigant need not show that he is “absolutely destitute,” but he must demonstrate that, because of his poverty, he cannot pay for the litigation costs and still be able to provide for the necessities of life. *Adkins v. E.I. DuPont de Nemours & Co.*, 335 U.S. 331, 339 (1948); *see also Lee v. McDonald’s Corp.*, 231 F.3d 456, 459 (8th Cir. 2000). Determining whether to grant or deny *in forma pauperis* status under § 1915 is within the sound discretion of the trial court. *Lee*, 231 F.3d at 458.

Plaintiff will be directed to either file a motion for leave to proceed *in forma pauperis* with the required financial information or pay the full \$402 filing fee for this case to proceed. Because plaintiff is currently incarcerated, he must also provide the Court with a certified prison account statement setting forth the past six months of his account in custody, prior to filing the complaint.

Additionally, plaintiff will be directed to file an amended complaint on a Court-provided form. *See* E.D. Mo. L.R. 2.06(A) (“All actions brought by self-represented plaintiffs or petitioners should be filed on Court-provided forms”). Plaintiff must sign the complaint form in compliance with Federal and Local Rules. *See* Fed. R. Civ. P. 11(a); E.D. Mo. L.R. 2.01(A)(1).

Plaintiff will be given thirty (30) days in which to comply with this Order. Failure to submit an amended complaint on a Court-provided form, and to either pay the \$402 filing fee or file a motion to proceed *in forma pauperis* accompanied by an account statement, will result in the dismissal of this action without prejudice and without further notice.

Accordingly,

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the Clerk is directed to mail to plaintiff blank copies of the Court’s “Prisoner Civil Rights Complaint” and “Application to Proceed in District Court without Prepaying Fees or Costs” forms.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that plaintiff must file an amended complaint on the Court form within **thirty (30) days** of the date of this Order.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that plaintiff must either pay the \$402 filing fee or file an application to proceed without prepayment within **thirty (30) days** of the date of this Order.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that if plaintiff files an application to proceed without prepayment, he must also file a certified copy of his inmate account statement for the six-month period preceding the filing of the complaint.

IT IS FINALLY ORDERED that if plaintiff fails to timely comply with this Order, the Court will dismiss this action without prejudice and without further notice.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shirley Padmore", written over a horizontal line.

SHIRLEY PADMORE MENSAH
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE

Dated this 20th day of December, 2021.